



# News on NEPHTS

An update on the Nevada Environmental Public Health Tracking Program

Issue 2

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## Program Update

Thank you to all those who have stayed involved in the Nevada Environmental Public Health Tracking System. As we continue to make progress in assessing Nevada's data capacity to successfully design and implement the tracking system, we rely on our on-going and prospering partnerships and collaboration with county and state health and environmental protection officials, non-governmental and community-based organizations, to stay involved in the process of creating and developing this tracking system. Since this program began in January 2003, we have held four Nevada Planning Consortium meetings in various locations across the state. On October 1, 2004 we will begin our third and final year in building capacity and completing the assessment phase (Part A) of our grant funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Our next Nevada Planning Consortium meeting is scheduled for Thursday July 8, 2004 in Las Vegas (location TBD). If you are from Northern Nevada, there are funds available for (one day) travel to Las Vegas from the NEPHTS program.

For more information on travel arrangements or the next Nevada Planning Consortium meeting, please call Maryanna Moyer, Education & Information Officer for the NEPHTS program at (775) 684-5957.

## SAVE THE DATE!

- **Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists 2004 Annual Conference**

June 6-10. Boise, ID

<http://www.cste.org/>

- **Nevada Planning Consortium**

July 8. Las Vegas, NV

<http://www.healthtrack.nv.gov>



The Metatomix logo features the word "metatomix" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The "meta" portion is in a dark blue color, while "tomix" is in a lighter blue. Above the text, there is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, curved, light blue lines that sweep across the top of the logo area.

## Vendor presentation at the Nevada Planning Consortium

As part of the grant activities to evaluate software products for the Nevada Environmental Public Health Tracking System (NEPHTS), software vendor company Metatomix, Inc. gave a special presentation at the last Nevada Planning Consortium meeting held April 8, 2004. Scott Marshall, Tom Knops and Jeff Cole of Metatomix Inc. visited Nevada to describe their products that could enable the NEPHTS to link data from across the state, region, and the nation. Scott Marshall gave a Power Point presentation outlining a possible role for Metatomix products as tools to give NEPHTS access to information regarding environmental hazards, exposure, and health outcomes by linking available data sources, while maintaining security protocols to protect data integrity and confidentiality. This linkage tool would allow Nevada to create an electronic alert system customized to respond to historical and/or real-time criteria. These tools allow public health professionals, and others experts, to communicate in a real or near real-time manner as public health events occur.

Additionally, the system “self-learns”, as professional staff upload new data, and core elements from on-going investigations and can be easily built upon to create new databases and modify and expand existing databases as needed. Integration systems provide greater access to larger amounts of information for experts to analyze and increase opportunities to discover similarities and differences.

Mr. Marshall explained that users interface with “dashboards”; visuals that can be tailored specifically for each user depending on the most relevant information to that particular user. Data sources need to be web-enabled, but no hardware changes are necessary to install or use the Metatomix product. Systems that are offline can also be linked but their information will not be available on a real-time basis.

The Metatomix presentation was a learning experience for Nevada Planning Consortium members, as well as the NEPHTS Technical Leadership Team, in the on-going efforts to evaluate the most appropriate software products for the Environmental Public Health Tracking System Network.

The NEPHTS is still in the planning and building capacity phase, or Part A, through October 2005. Implementation of a network requires comprehensive funding such as Part B Implementation Project funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

\*\*\*Metatomix presentation was included to educate and inform the EPHTS Technical Leadership Team and the Nevada Planning Consortium members regarding available software products and did not, either explicitly or implicitly, obligate the the EPHTS to purchase any of the products or services from Metatomix, Inc., and no cost was incurred by the State Health Division, or any agency of the State for this presentation.\*\*\*

## PACE-EH Project Ready to Assemble Community-based Environmental Health Assessment Team (CEHAT)

PACE-EH stands for the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Hhealth. The protocol was developed in 1995 by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to provide local health officials with assistance in community environmental health assessment.

PACE-EH is designed to help communities conduct and act on an assessment of environmental health concerns in their localities, while incorporating their values and perceptions. The protocol consists of 13 interrelated tasks from assessment preparation to environmental health issue identification, quantification and qualification of the identified issues, and action plan development (see box for complete list).

As part of a needs assessment, the NEPHTS program in cooperation with the Carson City Environmental Health Authority started the implementation of the PACE-EH in the fall of 2003. Expected benefits of the implementation are as follows:

- Improved environmental health decision-making and planning by the community,
- Leadership role in the community,
- Strengthened community support,
- Community understanding of critical connections between health and the environment,
- Appropriate distribution of environmental health services, and

An action plan capitalizing the strengths of the community to improve the community's health.

As part of Task 3 (see below) of the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE-EH), the PACE-EH project team is ready to select members for the Community-based Environmental Health Assessment (CEHA) Team. The CEHA team will help develop community collaboration and enhance local capacity by identifying environmental health issues, setting priorities for action, and developing action plans.

The CEHA team will include a variety of representatives from the community, including individuals who represent local economic interests, political structures and organizational institutions. Representation will be sought from key community groups such as healthcare providers/facilities, educational institutions, news media, government agencies, economic and commercial organizations, labor organizations, professional and trade groups, faith-based groups, and voluntary and private organizations.

If you are interested in participating in the CEHA team or providing assistance in the PACE-EH project, please contact the following PACE-EH project team members:

Dustin Boothe, Carson City Environmental Health Department  
Phone: 775-887-2190 email: [dboothe@ci.carson-city.nv.us](mailto:dboothe@ci.carson-city.nv.us)

Maryanna Moyer, Nevada State Health Division, Bureau of Community Health  
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### 13 Tasks of PACE-EH

1. Determine community capacity
2. Define and characterize the community
3. Assemble a community-based environmental health assessment team
4. Define the goals, objectives, and scope of the assessment
5. Generate a list of community-specific environmental health issues
6. Analyze the issues with a systems framework
7. Develop locally appropriate indicators
8. Select standards against which local status can be compared
9. Create issue profiles
10. Rank the issues
11. Set priorities for action
12. Develop an action plan
13. Evaluate progress and plan for the future

**NEVADA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
TRACKING SYSTEM**

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**The Nevada Environmental Public Health Tracking Program strives to improve the health of Nevada's communities through linking data about health outcomes such as asthma, cancer and birth defects with environmental hazard data and environmental exposure data. Tracking will provide information that can be used to plan apply and evaluation actions to prevent and control environmentally related diseases.**

**Linking: Health Effects, Hazards and Exposures**

**MAY IS ASTHMA AWARENESS  
MONTH!**



In the United States there are at least 4.8 million children who suffer from asthma and accounts for one third of all pediatric emergency room visits. In addition, asthma is the fourth most common reason for pediatric physician office visits, and is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism. Asthma is a long-term disease where the airway to the lungs constrict, causing wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing. Exposure to allergens and irritants such as dust mites, mold, cockroaches, pet dander, and secondhand smoke can cause an asthma attack. Individuals can significantly reduce exposures by identifying environmental triggers at home, in schools or at the workplace.

According to the Nevada Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFSS) there were more than 70,000 individuals (13.4%) living with asthma in Nevada in 2001. Additionally, adult females have higher asthma rates than adult males.

In response to these alarming national and state statistics, and in an effort to raise public awareness of the risks faced everyday by 20 million Americans living with asthma, the Environmental Protection Agency designated May 4, 2004 as World Asthma Day. May is also Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month.

Asthma is one of the major chronic diseases (health outcomes) that the Environmental Public Health Tracking System will track at schools and workplace. Furthermore, linking outdoor air quality (environmental determinate) data with asthma exacerbation/incidence data (health outcome) will provide the proper platform to protect the community and take appropriate actions to reduce morbidity, mortality and asthma associated costs.

For more information on Asthma or the Environmental Public Health Tracking System (NEPHTS) please feel free to contact:

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